

***NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 90-401
FEBRUARY 6, 2003***

***Staffing and Organization
Hardship Transfer Consideration, NWSPD 90-4
PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP TRANSFER***

NOTICE: This publication is available at: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/>.

OPR: CFO3 (H. Hartman)
Type of Issuance: Initial

Certified by: CFO3 (N. Scheller)

SUMMARY OF REVISIONS:

<u>Signed</u>	<u>2/23/03</u>
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Procedures for Consideration of Hardship Transfers

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1. Introduction. National Weather Service (NWS) Policy 90-4 established policy for consideration of hardship transfers requested by NWS employees. This instruction describes the procedures and criteria for consideration of request for hardship transfer.
2. Hardship Transfer Categories. Hardship transfers are considered in three categories.
 - a. Category I. The medical condition of the employee or the employee's spouse or children residing in the employee's household requires relocation to a geographic area deemed medically necessary to improve or maintain health or receive health services.
 - b. Category II. When an employee or employee's spouse is the primary caretaker of a dependent parent, and the medical condition of the parent requires the employee or employee's spouse to relocate to another geographic area.
 - c. Category III. In cases where a family is separated, where the transfer of an employee to another geographical area would allow the employee to maintain contact with his/her dependent children. Not all separations from children are considered a hardship. Certain factors are considered.
3. Application for Hardship Transfer Consideration. An employee may request consideration of a hardship transfer by sending an application to the NWS Management and Organization Division (CFO3). (See address below.) Each application must include the following information:
 - a. A statement the employee is requesting a hardship transfer.
 - b. The eligible position(s), grade(s), and geographical location(s) the employee is requesting.
 - c. The category of hardship under which the employee is applying, the specific reason(s) justifying the hardship need, and all supporting documentation, including for Category I and II requests, satisfactory records from professional health care providers. The documentation provided should be specific to the request.
 - d. An updated SF-171 or resume and a copy of the employee's last performance appraisal.
 - e. A release signed by the employee and/or the employee's relative authorizing the NWS to contact appropriate sources, as applicable, for the purpose of validating or clarifying any supplied documentation. Any follow up medical related inquiries should be directly connected with the request for consideration of hardship transfer.

Requests for hardship transfer consideration should be sent to:

National Weather Service
Hardship Transfer Request, W/CFO3
1325 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

4. Application Log. The CFO3 will receive and log applications for hardship transfer consideration. The following information will be included in the log:

- a. Employee name;
- b. Current grade/series/step;
- c. Current duty station;
- d. Requested duty station(s);
- e. Requested positions or types of positions;
- f. Bargaining unit status;
- g. Date application was received;
- h. Hardship category;
- i. Date receipt of application was acknowledged, more information was requested, or the application was returned as not valid;
- j. Date the employee was notified application was accepted or not accepted;
- k. Date the accepted applicant was added to the hardship transfer candidate list (HTCL);
- l. Date a request to withdraw the application or remove a name from HTCL was received; and
- m. Date a request to withdraw the application or remove a name from HTCL was acknowledged.

Information will be added to the log as it becomes available.

5. Processing Applications. Once the application is logged in, the following steps are followed.

5.1 Step 1: Identification of Union Involvement. Determine if the employee is in the bargaining unit. If the employee is in the bargaining unit, CFO3 will provide a copy of the application to the NWS Employees Organization (NWSEO) designee. If the employee is not in the bargaining unit, NWSEO is not consulted.

5.2 Step 2: Response to Applicant. Within 7 days of receipt of the application, CFO3 will respond to the applicant in one of the following ways:

- a. Acknowledge receipt using the letter shown in Appendix A;
- b. Request additional information using the letter shown in Appendix B; or

- c. Advise the applicant that the application is not valid, along with an explanation, and return the application using the letter shown in Appendix C.

5.3 Step 3: Consultation. With a complete application, CFO3 will consult with NWSEO (if applicable).

- d. Identify which of the three hardship categories applies (see Section 2.);
- e. Determine if the application conforms with NWS policy; and
- f. Determine if additional information is needed.

5.4 Step 4: Determination of Acceptance/Non-Acceptance of Application. After consultation based on Section 5.3, CFO will decide whether to accept or not accept the application for consideration of a hardship transfer. However, if the applicant is a bargaining unit employee, CFO will obtain a consensus decision with the NWSEO designee on acceptance or non-acceptance of the application. Without consensus, the application will not be approved.

5.5. Step 5: Letter of Acceptance/Non-Acceptance to Applicant. Within 30 days of receipt of an application, CFO3 will send the applicant a letter of acceptance (Appendix D) or non-acceptance (Appendix E). The letter of non-acceptance will provide an explanation of why the application was not accepted. The application will be returned with the letter of non-acceptance.

6. Hardship Transfer Candidate List. Accepted applicants will be added to the hardship transfer candidate list (HTCL). Access to this list will be restricted to Deputy Regional Directors, Executive Officers for NWS Headquarters Offices and NCEP, Staff Office Directors in the NWS Office of the Assistant Administrator, and an NWSEO designee. Deputy Regional Directors, Executive Officers, and Staff Office Directors will provide selecting officials access to the HTCL. CFO3 will update the HTCL weekly and will include the following information:

- a. Employee Name
- b. Current Grade/Series/Step
- c. Current Duty Station
- d. Requested Duty Station
- e. Requested Position or Types of Positions

6.1 Request to Withdraw Application/Remove Name from HTCL. Applicant's accepted into the hardship transfer consideration program have the option of withdrawing their application or removing their name from the HTCL.

- a. Withdrawal of application: Within seven days of receipt of a request to withdraw an application, CFO3 will return the application with an acknowledgement (see Appendix F). If the applicant is in the bargaining unit, CFO3 will notify the NWSEO.

- b. Removal of name from HTCL: Within seven days of receipt of a request to remove an accepted applicant's name from the HTCL, CFO3 will send an acknowledgment to the applicant and return the application (see Appendix G). If the applicant is in the bargaining unit, CFO3 will notify the NWSEO.

7. Notification of Vacancy. The HTCL is a recruitment source for selecting officials. When a vacancy of an appropriate and/or desired position becomes available, the selecting official will review the HTCL for employees requesting the duty location of the vacancy. Employees requesting the duty location will be notified by the selecting official or other designee of the vacancy and given the opportunity to apply (see Appendix H). The notification to the hardship transfer candidate will be maintained in the selection package. If there are no hardship transfer candidates, the selecting official will note this in the selection package.

7.1 Candidacy for Vacancy. Selecting officials will take eligibility for a hardship transfer under consideration when making a selection. However, while this will be a consideration factor, the candidate must be qualified for the vacancy and meet minimum qualification standards. The hardship transfer candidate will be rated on the same basis as other qualified candidates. The selecting official will note consideration given in the selection package.

8. Travel and Relocation Expenses. NWS will pay travel and relocation expenses for an employee's permanent change of station in accordance with applicable law and regulation.

9. Reporting Requirements. By October 31 of each year, Deputy Regional Directors, Executive Officers, and Staff Office Directors will provide a report on hardship transfer activity in their respective Office or Region. Each report will include the following information:

- a. Number of hardship transfer candidates invited to apply for vacancies;
- b. Number of hardship transfer candidates who applied for vacancies;
- c. Number of hardship transfer candidates who were selected for positions; and
- d. Number of hardship transfer candidates who accepted job offers.

9.1 Summary Report Requirement. CFO3 will provide a NWS-wide summary report on the information in Section 9.0 to the Workforce/Human Capital Committee and the NWSEO designee.

Appendix A

Acknowledge Receipt of Application

Dear _____:

This letter acknowledges receipt of your application for hardship transfer consideration. You will be notified of acceptance/non-acceptance of your application within 30 days.

Sincerely,

NWS Management and Organization
Division

cc:
NWSEO designee
(if employee is in the
bargaining unit)

Appendix B

Request for More Information

Dear _____:

This letter acknowledges receipt of your application for hardship transfer consideration. Before your application can be considered, we need the following information:

Sincerely,

NWS Management and Organization
Division

cc:
NWSEO designee
(if employee is in the
bargaining unit)

Appendix C

Application Not Valid

Dear _____:

This letter acknowledges receipt of your application for hardship transfer consideration. Your application can not be considered for the following reasons:

Your application is enclosed. You may re-apply with additional information or should your situation change.

Sincerely,

NWS Chief Financial Officer

NWS Employees Organization
(if employee is in the bargaining unit)

Enclosure

Appendix D

Acceptance of Application

Dear _____:

Your application for hardship transfer consideration has been accepted and your name placed on the National Weather Service (NWS) Hardship Transfer Candidate List. NWS selecting officials have access to this list and will notify you when a vacancy for the type of position you requested is opening at your requested duty station. You will need to qualify and apply for the vacancy to be considered.

Sincerely,

NWS Chief Financial Officer

NWS Employees Organization
(if employee is in the bargaining unit)

Appendix E

Non-acceptance of Application

Dear _____:

Your application for hardship transfer consideration was not accepted for the following reasons:

Your application is enclosed. You may re-apply with additional information or should your situation change.

Sincerely,

NWS Chief Financial Officer

NWS Employees Organization
(if employee is in the bargaining unit)

Enclosure

Appendix F

Acknowledge Request to Withdraw Application

Dear _____:

This letter acknowledges receipt of your request to withdraw your application for hardship transfer consideration. Your application is enclosed.

Sincerely,

NWS Management and Organization
Division

Enclosure

cc:
NWSEO designee
(if employee is in the
bargaining unit)

Appendix G

Acknowledge Request to Remove Name from HTCL

Dear _____:

This letter acknowledges receipt of your request to have your name removed from the Hardship Transfer Candidate List. Your name has been removed from the list. Your application is enclosed.

Sincerely,

NWS Management and Organization
Division

Enclosure

cc:
NWSEO designee
(if employee is in the
bargaining unit)

Appendix H

Notification of Vacancy

Dear _____:

Your name is on the NWS Hardship Transfer Candidate List requesting a transfer to _____.
A vacancy is opening at (duty station). You will need to apply for the vacancy to be considered.

Sincerely,

NWS Selecting Official